Recognition of prior learning

POLICY NO: A-13.26

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CURRENT AMENDMENT: July 2023

REFERENCE AUTHORITY: Registrar and Director: Student and Academic Services

CROSS-REFERENCES:
- A-18: Selection and entry to coursework programs
- A-45: Program transition
- A-49: Postgraduate Coursework degrees with a significant research component
- Program Approval Manual (PAM)
- Australian Qualifications Framework Qualifications Pathways Policy

CONTENTS:

Purpose

UniSA recognises prior learning by granting credit or advanced standing towards the requirements of University award programs.

The prior learning may be from:
- a recognised higher education provider
- a TAFE or other Vocational Education Training (VET) provider
- a professional body, enterprise, or private educational institution
- work experience or practical experience, including voluntary work
- life experience

This policy is based on the following broad principles:
- providing opportunities for students to proceed from one level of education/training to another
- facilitating student progress, completion and mobility
- recognising knowledge and skills that students have gained, meeting the learning outcomes of University award programs
- setting entry requirements that recognise prior learning and reduce program duration, where appropriate
- granting maximum recognition for prior learning
- granting credit using a consistent and equitable approach across the University
- ensuring clear, publicly available credit provisions

Scope

This policy applies to all future and current students in undergraduate and postgraduate coursework programs and enabling programs of the University. The policy does not apply to higher degree by research students or to students undertaking short programs (see policy *A-53: Short Programs*).

Definitions

Advanced standing recognises that a student may have completed previous qualifications that may reduce the duration of a Masters program.

Articulation is specific design within education and training programs to facilitate and maximise opportunities for students to proceed from one level of education/training to the next.

Confirmation of Enrolment (CoE) is a form issued by the University to international students studying in Australia on a student visa, for student visa purposes.

Credit is the recognition of prior learning granted towards the requirements of an award program on the basis of prior study or prior work and/or life experience.

The **Credit Assessor** is a database that lists existing precedent for credit arrangements and formal credit transfer agreements between UniSA and other providers.

International student is a student studying in Australia on a temporary visa, or a non-Australian citizen studying overseas via online or distance education. Students enrolled in a program delivered by an offshore partner are not considered international students.

Policy

1. Credit for prior learning is granted only where the prior study or experience is assessed as equivalent in content and learning outcomes to the courses for which credit is being sought.

2. Credit decisions should preserve the broad integrity and the intended Graduate Qualities profile of the program.

3. UniSA credit arrangements support the *Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) Qualifications Pathways Policy*.

4. Credit is not automatically granted in all programs. Program rules determining credit are available on the program pages on the website of the University.

5. Eligibility for credit does not guarantee an applicant's admission to a program.

6. Advice on indicative credit can be provided to future students, but a final decision on credit will not be made until a student is admitted into a program. A final decision on credit will be made for an international or UniSA Online student when an offer is made to the student.

7. Credit granted must be academically defensible and take into account the student's capacity to progress and complete their program requirements.

8. Program-specific requirements must be fulfilled, for example conditions associated with professional accreditation.

9. Credit will not normally be granted for learning completed more than ten years before the time of application unless there is evidence of substantial relevant experience during the intervening period. Program-specific requirements may apply whereby previous learning must have been completed within a shorter period before the time of application.

10. The program director, or nominee, determines the total amount of credit that may be awarded in a program, subject to the maximum allowable credit outlined in clause 20 of this policy and Appendix E.

11. Decisions on the type of credit granted must be made in accordance with:
    a. this policy, and
    b. agreements with other providers, and
    c. procedures and frameworks approved by Academic Board.

12. Formal credit transfer agreements may be established with recognised higher education or vocational education training providers in Australia and other countries. These agreements must be approved by academic unit boards and a copy provided to Student and Academic Services for entry into the Credit Assessor.

13. Student and Academic Services must record in the Credit Assessor all credit that is a precedent or an approved formal agreement.

14. In special circumstances, for example where the applicant is unable to present sufficient documentary evidence to allow for the normal determination of credit, the applicant may be allowed to undertake an assessment process, which may be written. Authority to make this decision resides with the relevant program director, in consultation with the course coordinator and other academic staff as appropriate.

15. If a student undertakes internal transfer, credit approved for the original program will not automatically be transferred. Students reapply for credit under the new program. Advice on possible credit may be provided to future students on request. However a final decision on credit will not be made until the student is admitted to the program.

16. Transition credit arrangements will be managed in accordance with policy *A-45: Program transition*.

17. UniSA is not obliged to make arrangements for individual students if timetable clashes or unacceptable study combinations arise from a credit arrangement.

18. **Types of credit at UniSA**

    18.1 Block credit recognises completion of a previous qualification that contains equivalent learning. It is expressed in units. Courses for which credit is provided are listed on the student's record

    18.2 Specified credit is granted for part of a program when:
        a. the student has completed curriculum that is substantially the same, and
        b. the completed curriculum constitutes at least the same proportion of fulltime study, and
        c. the student has attained at least a pass standard in that prior learning.

    18.3 Unspecified credit is granted when there is no equivalent component in the UniSA program. Unspecified credit is usually granted as an elective.

    18.4 Exemption is a release from specified parts of a course, or an assessment task, or part of an assessment task. No reduction in fees or student contributions occurs when a student obtains an exemption.

    18.5 Exemption cannot be granted for work completed in a course that the student has previously failed, unless the student requests an exemption before re-enrolling in the course.

    18.6 Studies in lieu are granted when a student undertakes alternative work in place of a specified course.

19. **Advanced standing**

    19.1 The University uses Advanced Standing in its Masters programs only.

    19.2 Advanced standing recognises prior studies and experience at a level and/or in a discipline that satisfies the requirements of the early courses in a Masters program.

    19.3 To claim advanced standing, students must demonstrate that they have completed studies in a discipline area or at an appropriate level that would allow them to claim 18 or 36 units of a Masters program. See Appendix D for more details.

    19.4 Students may be able to use a combination of credit and advanced standing to reduce the duration of their Masters program. Refer to clause 20.10 of this policy for the limits that apply.

    19.5 Students are not required to apply for advanced standing. Campus Central, UniSA International or Offshore Administration will advise the student whether they have obtained advanced standing and record it on the student's file.

20. Maximum credit

The maximum credit allowed is specified below and is summarised in Appendix E. Variations from the maximum must be academically justifiable and approved by the Academic Unit Board. Where the maximum credit is exceeded in a recorded precedent or formal credit agreement, the Academic Unit Board must provide a report which sets out the academic justification for the variation to the Academic Standards and Quality Committee.

20.1 Enabling programs
A maximum of one half of the total units towards an enabling program of the University where the program is 36 units or more in length. No credit is available towards UniSA enabling programs that are less than 36 units in length.

20.2 Diploma
A maximum of two thirds of the total units towards a two-year diploma of the University.
A maximum of half of the total units towards a one-year diploma program.

20.3 Associate degree
A maximum of two thirds of the total units towards an Associate Degree of the University.

20.4 Undergraduate degree
The maximum limit must enable students to complete the equivalent of at least one year full time study in a single undergraduate degree program of the University.

20.5 Double degree
The maximum limit must enable students to complete the equivalent of at least one year full time study from each contributing program in a double degree of the University.

20.6 Degrees with Honours
The maximum limit must enable students to complete the equivalent of at least one year full time study in a undergraduate degree with honours program of the University.

20.7 Honours degree
A maximum of one third of the total units towards an honours degree of the University. No credit can be claimed towards the research project component.

20.8 Graduate Certificate
A maximum of one third of the total units towards a Graduate Certificate of the University. Additional credit can be granted for non-award courses undertaken at UniSA.

20.9 Graduate Diploma
A maximum of one third of the total units towards a Graduate Diploma of the University. Additional credit can be granted for non-award courses undertaken at UniSA. Credit can be claimed for a Graduate Certificate undertaken as part of a nested suite of the University.

20.10 Masters by coursework
A maximum of one third of the total units applies towards a coursework Masters of the University. Additional credit can be granted for non-award courses undertaken at UniSA. Credit can be claimed for a Graduate Certificate or Graduate Diploma undertaken as part of a nested suite of programs of the University.

These credit rules may be applied in addition to Advanced Standing rules for two-year Masters programs, provided the maximum limit enables students to complete the equivalent of at least one year full time study in the Masters program of the University.

20.11 Professional doctorate
A maximum of one third of the total units towards a Professional Doctorate of the University.

21. Authority to approve credit

21.1 Authorised professional staff may approve credit applications when there is a clear precedent or an existing credit agreement. Professional staff should seek advice from the program director, where required.

21.2 If academic assessment is required, the program director, or nominated academic staff member, must approve the credit application.

22. Using an assessment task to determine credit

22.1 If a program director allows an applicant to demonstrate prior knowledge through an assessment, the course coordinator is responsible for arranging, administering and marking the assessment, and will advise the student and program director of relevant arrangements.

22.2 The assessment should gauge whether the applicant's prior learning is comparable in content and standard with the course(s) for which they are seeking credit. Credit should be granted when the applicant completes the assessment with at least a 'pass' result.

23. Applying for credit

23.1 The processes of applying for and assessing credit towards programs of the University do not attract a fee.

23.2 Applications for credit in onshore or online programs must be made on the prescribed form accompanied by supporting documents, and lodged with Campus Central.

23.3 The admissions process for offshore students includes credit processes. UniSA International and/or Offshore Administration are responsible for managing the admissions process for offshore students.

23.4 Applications for credit can be lodged at any time before enrolment. After enrolment, applications must be lodged at least two weeks before the census date for that study period. This allows decisions regarding credit to be made in a timely way.

23.5 Completed applications are retained on the student's record.

24. Outcome of a credit application

24.1 The relevant academic or professional staff member will annotate the application form indicating the decision and reasons or conditions, and return it to Campus Central, UniSA International, UniSA Online or Offshore Administration, as applicable.

24.2 Campus Central, UniSA International, UniSA Online or Offshore Administration will:
   a.   advise the applicants of the outcome in writing, and
   b.   record the decision on the student record system.

24.3 Credit and program duration for international students on a student visa must be reflected in the CoE. If the amount of credit to which the student is entitled operates to shorten the program duration after a student visa is issued, Campus Central will provide the student with a revised CoE.

25. Recording credit

    25.1 Credit can be recorded as:

        a.   specified courses, and/or

        b.   a specified number of units within a particular area of the program, and/or

        c.   transition credit, and/or

        d.   a qualifying requirement to complete the award.

    25.2 Credit will not be graded or included in the student's grade point average unless this is part of the agreement between the University and another provider, and that the provider's courses and results are displayed on the student record system.

    25.3 Credit towards a program of the University will be displayed on the student record system when the credit has been granted from courses completed in another program of the University.

    25.4 The credit record should include the names and/or codes of courses for which credit has been granted and include a description of this credit.

26. Appeals

    26.1 A student who is dissatisfied with a decision relating to credit may lodge a written appeal with the Executive Dean responsible for the program, or delegate.

    26.2 A student who is dissatisfied with the decision of the Executive Dean, or delegate, can only appeal to the Credit Appeals Committee on the grounds that this policy has not been complied with.

    26.3 The Credit Appeals Committee is a sub-committee of Academic Board. Members include three academic staff nominated by the Chair of Academic Board, and an Executive Officer from Student and Academic Services.

    26.4 The Credit Appeals Committee decision is the final avenue of appeal within the University. Students have the right to lodge a complaint about decisions made by the Credit Appeals Committee with a relevant external agency. Contact details for relevant external agencies can be found on the University's website.

Appendix A

Credit transfer framework

1. **Credit for higher education, as defined in the Higher Education Support Act**

    1.1 Courses that are part of higher education award programs may be recognised for credit towards awards of the University.

    1.2 Credit may also be granted for non-award programs and courses undertaken at higher education providers.

    1.3 Credit will be granted for a course where there is substantial overlap of content and/or learning outcomes with a course of the University.

    1.4 Academic Units may approve block credit for major sequences of study. The Academic Unit must devise a program of study that allows the student to meet the requirements in the minimum time.

2. **Credit for TAFE studies**

    2.1 Credit transfer arrangements must be documented using the prescribed form and approved by the Academic Unit and TAFE.

    2.2 Credit transfer arrangements should maximise credit without compromising the prospects of student success.

    2.3 Credit arrangements must preserve the professional accreditation or recognition of awards of the University.

    2.4 Completed TAFE awards may be used for both entry and credit towards awards of the University.

    2.5 Credit can be granted horizontally for individual courses at introductory levels. It can also be granted vertically for sequences within a program.

    2.6 The University will grant a minimum amount of block credit towards its undergraduate programs for completed TAFE awards at Certificate IV and above. This applies unless there are program-specific reasons why credit should not be granted.

    2.7 No credit will be granted towards an undergraduate degree of the University for TAFE awards below a completed Certificate IV, unless a strong case can be made.

    2.8 Additional block credit can be granted for other TAFE awards to provide the applicant with credit beyond the minimum amount, but the amount of credit granted cannot exceed the maximum specified in this policy.

    2.9 Courses of the University, for which block credit is granted, must be specified in the Credit Assessor, and also in the program schedule/notes in the program approval documentation, which is then published on the UniSA program website pages.

    2.10 Block credit decisions are managed by program administrators, reported to the Student and Academic Services, and entered in the Credit Assessor, to set a precedent for future applications.

3. Credit for studies undertaken at a registered provider

3.1 The University recognises prior learning for courses that form part of an award accredited under the Australian Qualifications Framework, or that are recognised internationally.

3.2 The University may grant block credit for a completed accredited award program if:
   a. it has been directly involved in the program development, or
   b. the program articulates with a specific program of the University, or
   c. the program contains content equivalent to a program of the University.

4. Credit for prior learning from work and/or life experience

4.1 Credit may be granted for work or life experience where this learning can be demonstrated. The applicant must provide evidence that their uncertified training or experiential learning provides the skills, knowledge and understanding equivalent to outcomes that they would have gained by completing the required UniSA courses.

4.2 The program director will assess the credit application and will take into account:
   a whether the applicant can demonstrate the learning outcome that is being claimed (authenticity), and
   b whether the learning outcome is still valid (currency), and
   c whether the learning is relevant (relevance), and
   d whether the learning has reached the required level (quality), and
   e whether the learning outcome can be applied outside the context in which it was learned (transferability).

Appendix B

Contextual factors

The primary consideration when assessing an application for the recognition of prior learning is whether the prior learning is equivalent in content and learning outcomes to the courses(s) for which credit is being sought.

The following factors may help decision-makers in assessing the standard of prior learning:

1. the educational practices and standards of the provider(s)
2. program-specific objectives and methods for achieving them
3. program admission requirements
4. program duration
5. breadth, depth, and balance in the program material and the intellectual effort required
6. procedures for approving research projects, if applicable
7. methods used to assess student progress, including the use of external examiners for higher degrees.
8. the relative emphasis on learning skills related to the discipline
9. opportunities for any practical training and experience
10. the teaching staff conducting the program, including numbers, qualifications and experience, and expertise
11. accommodation and facilities such as equipment, library, laboratories, workshops and other resources
12. transfer arrangements between programs
13. currency of the previous qualification or course

Appendix C

Process for determining block credit for related and unrelated Vocational Education and Training (VET) programs including TAFE SA and the Australian Defence Force (ADF)

1. Identify the amount of credit for generic skills for the VET qualification, taking into account the University program's graduate qualities profile. Specify the course(s) of the University's program for which the minimum block credit will be granted.

2. Identify the core VET courses that students must have undertaken to achieve more than minimum block credit. Make a judgement about the amount of credit that will be granted. There will seldom be an exact match. Credit should be provided where the match is 75% or better.

3. Consider the discipline-specific VET electives, where students choose electives that have similarities. Identify the amount of credit that will be provided.

4. The credit identified in steps 1, 2 and 3 above constitutes block credit for a particular award and should be registered on the Credit Assessor. All students applying to the University would receive this amount of credit. Students seeking additional credit (Step 4) will need to apply directly to the program director.

5. Identify any 'free' electives undertaken in the VET award. Identify the amount of credit that will be provided.

    Note that credit must not be double counted. For example, credit may not be given for Certificate IV study as well as for Diploma study in cases where the Certificate IV study is nested and has been counted as part of the Diploma qualification.

6. In some instances no credit can be given due to the requirements of professional bodies.

7. Credit granted must not exceed the provisions of this policy.

Table 1: Minimum and maximum credit awarded by UniSA for VET programs of study

VET qualification	Minimum credit for UniSA award *(for related or unrelated programs)*	Recommended maximum credit for UniSA award *(for related programs)*
Certificate IV	**4.5 units** for 2 year award **4.5 units** for 3 year award **4.5 units** for 4 year award	**9 units** for 2 year award **9 units** for 3 year award **9 units** for 4 year award
Diploma	**9 units** for 2 year award **9 units** for 3 year award **9 units** for 4 year award	**18 units (25%)** for 2 year award **36 units (33%)** for 3 year award **36 units (25%)** for 4 year award
Advanced Diploma	**13.5 units** for 2 year award **13.5 units** for 3 year award **13.5 units** for 4 year award	**36 unit**s for 2 year award **54 units (50%)** for 3 year award **54 units (37.5%)** for 4 year award

Associate Degree	**13.5 units** for 2 year award **13.5 units** for 3 year award **13.5 units** for 4 year award	**36 units (50%)** for 2 year award **Up to 72 units for non-articulating awards** in 3 year award **72 units for articulating awards** in 4 year award

Appendix D

Advanced standing* – only available for two-year Masters programs.

Previous learning	No. of units of advanced standing	Remaining units (to be studied at UniSA)
Related discipline		
Bachelor Honours degree (or graduate diploma/certificate**)	36	36 units
Bachelor degree	18	54 units
Unrelated discipline		
Bachelor Honours degree (or grad dip/cert)	18	54 units
Bachelor degree	0	72 units

** If this has Academic Unit Board approval

Appendix E

Maximum credit allowed into programs

Type of program	Length of program		Max. % credit*	Max. units of credit
	Years	Units		
Enabling programs	No less than 36 units		50%	18
Diploma	1 year	36	50%	18
Diploma	2 years	72	62.5%	45
Associate degree	2 years	72	62.5%	45
Undergraduate degree (at least one year of the degree must be studied)	3 years	108	66%	72
4-year double degree (at least one year must be studied from each degree)	4 years	144	50%	72
5-year double degree (at least one year must be studied from each degree)	5 years	180	60%	108
6-year double degree (at least one year must be studied from each degree)	6 years	216	66%	144
4-year Honours degree (at least one year must be studied of the degree)	4 years	144	75%	108
Honours degree	1 year	36	25%	9
Graduate certificate	6 months	18	25%	4.5
Graduate diploma (as part of a nested suite of programs)	1 year	36	25%	9
Masters by coursework	1.5 years	54	33%	18
Masters by coursework	2 years	72	31.25%	22.5
Professional doctorate	3 years	108	33%	72

*the percentage may vary from the maximum specified in section 20 above because approved credit must comprise one or more whole courses

AMENDMENTS:

- August 1994
- October 1994
- Academic Board Resolution 94/9/167
- Registrar – November 1994
- Academic Board Resolution 98/7/124
- Registrar – August 1998
- Registrar – November 1999
- Registrar – November 2000
- Academic Board Resolution 2001/9/179
- Director: Student and Academic Services – September 2004
- Director: Student and Academic Services – June 2005
- Director: Student and Academic Services – June 2006
- Academic Board Resolution 2008/3/55
- Director: Student and Academic Services – August 2008
- Director: Student and Academic Services – October 2008
- Director: Student and Academic Services – September 2009
- Director: Student and Academic Services – 4 January 2011
- Academic Board – June 2013
- Academic Board – May 2015
- Director: Student and Academic Services – July 2017
- Academic Board – June 2019
- Director: Student and Academic Services – November 2019
- Vice-Chancellor – December 2019
- Director: Student and Academic Services – February 2021
- Director: Student and Academic Services – January 2023
- Director: Student and Academic Services – July 2023